U.S. Department of Education
2010 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

Type of School: (Check all that apply) [X] Charter [X] Title I [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal: Ms. Jennifer Epps

Official School Name: Synergy Charter Academy

School Mailing Address:
1010 East 34th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90011-2527

County: Los Angeles State School Code Number*: 19-64733-0106427

Telephone: (323) 233-8559 Fax: (323) 931-3298

Web site/URL: www.wearesynergy.org E-mail: jennepps@gmail.com

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*: Mr. Randy Palisoc

District Name: Los Angeles Unified School District Tel: (213) 241-1000

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Ms. Tiffany Sanders

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

_____ Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*
The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager (aba.kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2009-2010 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2004.

6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009.

7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: (per district designation)

1	Elementary schools (includes K-8)
0	Middle/Junior high schools
0	High schools
0	K-12 schools
1	**TOTAL**

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 8117

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

[X] Urban or large central city
[ ] Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
[ ] Suburban
[ ] Small city or town in a rural area
[ ] Rural

4. 2 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0	**6**	0	0	0
K	7	13	20	**7**	0	0	0
1	11	9	20	**8**	0	0	0
2	8	12	20	**9**	0	0	0
3	7	13	20	**10**	0	0	0
4	14	11	25	**11**	0	0	0
5	23	27	50	**12**	0	0	0
		TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL					155

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:

0 %	American Indian or Alaska Native
1 %	Asian
12 %	Black or African American
86 %	Hispanic or Latino
0 %	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
1 %	White
0 %	Two or more races
100 %	**Total**

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 5 %

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred ***to*** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	3
(2)	Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	4
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	7
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	155
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.045
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	4.516

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 39 %

Total number limited English proficient 60

Number of languages represented: 1

Specify languages:

Spanish

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 88 %

Total number students who qualify: 137

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 9 %

Total Number of Students Served: 14

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

1	Autism		Orthopedic Impairment
	Deafness		Other Health Impaired
	Deaf-Blindness	7	Specific Learning Disability
	Emotional Disturbance	5	Speech or Language Impairment
	Hearing Impairment		Traumatic Brain Injury
	Mental Retardation		Visual Impairment Including Blindness
	Multiple Disabilities	1	Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	Full-Time	**Part-Time**
Administrator(s)	2	0
Classroom teachers	7	0
Special resource teachers/specialists	0	5
Paraprofessionals	0	0
Support staff	2	2
Total number	11	7

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 **22 :1**

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Daily student attendance	99%	99%	99%	99%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	98%	98%	97%	98%	97%
Teacher turnover rate	14%	28%	14%	0%	0%
Student dropout rate	%	%	%	%	%

Please provide all explanations below.

Appearance of a high teacher turnover rate in 2006-07 and 2007-08 is due to small staff size. For these years, a total of three out of seven teachers left for personal reasons (one teacher in 2006-2007 and two teachers in 2007-2008). One teacher was promoted to administration in 2008-09.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2009 are doing as of the Fall 2009.

Graduating class size	_____	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	_____	%
Enrolled in a community college	_____	%
Enrolled in vocational training	_____	%
Found employment	_____	%
Military service	_____	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	_____	%
Unknown	_____	%
Total	_____	%

PART III - SUMMARY

In the fall of 2004, Synergy Charter Academy opened in inner city South Los Angeles with the mission of eliminating the achievement gap that has persisted for generations among disadvantaged students. Synergy's vision is for its students to eventually attend the four-year college of their choice. Synergy is located near the area of the historic 1992 Los Angeles riots. Nearly 20 years after this traumatic event, South Los Angeles remains a community of great need and limited educational resources. For example, there are no bookstores in the area, but liquor stores may be found on every other corner. Synergy's founders wanted to provide the community with a safe and high-quality public school so that urban youth could look forward to a positive future away from gangs and violence.

Based on results over the past five years, Synergy has kept true to its mission and vision and has been providing students with educational opportunities that historically did not exist in their neighborhood. For example, all stakeholders have been successful in catapulting our students' academic achievement from the bottom percentiles of all schools statewide to the top 10% of all schools statewide, based on state standardized test scores. The Synergy community has done this by providing students with a rigorous, research-based and standards-based curriculum that is well rounded and includes character education, physical education, the visual and performing arts, and field trips. On a typical school day, visitors will see students not only engaged in rigorous lessons, but they will also see students having fun learning. Additionally, in order to ensure that our students are not left behind in the digital age, every student has daily one-to-one interaction with a variety of educational programs in our school's computer lab.

Traditions that celebrate our students learning and citizenship include weekly reading awards and monthly citizenship and attendance awards. Parents look forward to attending our annual Math Counts Assembly and End-of-the-Year Awards Assembly, where students proudly accept their medals, trophies, and certificates honoring their hard work and accomplishments. Our students showcase their talents for their families and the community by performing songs during the Patriotic Assembly, Fall Festival, and Winter Assembly. They also exhibit their artistic skills during the Arts Festival and display their enthusiasm for the Scientific Method during the Science Fair.

Synergy is worthy of consideration for a Blue Ribbon Award because we have achieved the following milestones, not typically seen in the inner city:

- Synergy Charter Academy is accredited by the Western Association for Schools and Colleges
- 2009 Title I Academic Achievement Award, California Department of Education
- 2009, 2008, 2007 Honor Roll, California Business for Education Excellence
- 2008 California Distinguished School, California Department of Education
- 2008 California Charter School of the Year, California Charter Schools Association
- 2008, 2007 Silver Gain School, The Effective Practice Incentive Community
- 2007 Charter Schools Excellence Award, The Siart Foundation
- 2007 National Charter School of the Year, Center for Education Reform, Washington, D.C.

Overall, we believe in embracing all stakeholders as part of the "Synergy Family," and we attribute our school's success over the years to the "sense of synergy" that we have created on our campus. As one of our student's parents once described, "synergy" occurs when we "work together for a better outcome."

As we look to the future, we are honored that our school was nominated for a National Blue Ribbon School Award, and we look forward to developing our school into a "professional development school" where we can share our best practices with educators nationwide so that together, we can help eliminate the achievement gap and provide educational equity for all students in all schools.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. **Assessment Results:**

Synergy Charter Academy opened in 2004 in order to make a difference in one of the most challenging neighborhoods of inner city South Los Angeles. Synergy is proud of its students' assessment results over the past five years. The results have been clear indicators of academic success and have shown that Synergy is a leader in helping to eliminate the achievement gap.

Every spring, Synergy participates in the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program, which is California's state assessment system. The state performance levels of the STAR program are reported as five performance bands – Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic, and Far Below Basic. The performance levels that demonstrate "meeting the standard" are Proficient and Advanced. As part of STAR, Synergy students in grades 2-5 take the California Standards Test (CST), which is a criterion-referenced test based on California's rigorous content standards. Students are tested in both English Language Arts and in Mathematics. Additionally, fourth grade students have a writing component, and fifth grade students have a science component. Information on the state assessment system may be found at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/.

The trends in Synergy's test data indicate that its students have made tremendous gains in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. In it's first year of operation in 2005, Synergy already became the highest-performing school in its challenging inner city neighborhood with 28% of its students proficient or advanced in English Language Arts and 52% of students proficient or advanced in Mathematics. Over the past five years, Synergy's scores have surged ahead and have shown significant gains. In 2009 in English Language Arts, 69% of students were proficient or advanced, which is a 41% gain over five years. In 2009 in Mathematics, 87% of students were proficient or advanced, which is a 35% gain over five years.

It is interesting to note that Synergy's students' scores are trending more towards the Advanced performance band as the years go by. For example, in 2009 in Mathematics, most students actually surpassed the Proficient band, with 55% of students reaching the highest band of Advanced. In 2009 in both English Language Arts and Mathematics, the performance band with the largest number of students was not just the Proficient band, but the Advanced band.

When Synergy's scores are disaggregated, it shows that Synergy's significant subgroups are performing well and are meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress benchmarks set by No Child Left Behind. In 2009, Synergy's economically disadvantaged subgroup scored 69% proficient or advanced in English Language Arts on the CST and 86% proficient or advanced in Mathematics. Synergy's Latino subgroup scored 71% proficient or advanced in English Language Arts and 90% proficient or advanced in Mathematics.

Synergy has identified third grade English Language Arts as its most challenging grade level area, which is also the most challenging elementary area on a statewide basis as well. Although Synergy's 2009 third grade students earned a five-year high score of 53% proficient or advanced on the English Language Arts CST and outperformed the statewide average of 44% proficient or advanced, it is lower than Synergy's scores in other areas. Additionally, as is the case statewide, English Learners are a subgroup that merits close attention now and into the future. Synergy does not yet have a numerically significant English Learner subgroup, but it recognizes their challenges both on a school-wide level and on a statewide level as well.

The CST forms the basis of California's Academic Performance Index (API), which is on a scale of 200 to 1,000. The goal for all California public schools is a score of 800. Synergy's 2009 API score of 898 is well above the state goal of 800 and is a 189-point gain over five years.

2. **Using Assessment Results:**

Synergy is a data-driven school that uses assessment data to understand and improve student and school performance. The assessment data (diagnostic, formative, and summative) helps Synergy continuously plan, monitor, and improve academic programs. For example, during our summer Teacher Training Academy, the staff reviews the previous spring's state testing results to evaluate the school's academic program and to chart a course for the new year based on students' needs. In addition to state testing, other assessments include Open Court Reading assessments, student work samples, and the Scholastic Reading Inventory. Assessments are used to:

- Identify students' progress toward achieving standards.
- Identify students who need additional instruction or intervention.
- Prescribe a re-teaching or intervention focus for individual students.
- Identify professional development needs and target school resources.

Throughout the year, Synergy uses periodic assessments to measure academic progress and identify students in need of differentiated instruction or intervention. Assessments also break down skills in order to focus intervention and pinpoint areas of need. For example, if students score low in fluency, teachers make immediate adjustments to provide more instruction in phonics and fluency. If a student had a high fluency score but had a low comprehension score, it may indicate that the student can read words quickly but is having trouble extracting meaning from a passage. Consequently, the student may receive more instruction in reading comprehension rather than in phonics instruction.

Examples of using data to systematically guide decision-making include using data to identify professional development needs, to make wise budget decisions, and to target resources to areas of need. As an illustration, teachers identified Writing as an area of need, and they concluded that additional resources and professional development in writing instruction was required. Consequently, professional development was scheduled to address the area of writing, and various programs were studied, purchased, and implemented.

Synergy believes that all children can achieve or exceed grade level standards. Frequent monitoring of data is the only way to ensure that progress in being made toward reaching that goal.

3. **Communicating Assessment Results:**

Synergy realizes that its vision of college admissions for its elementary students is more powerful if it is a shared vision and if everyone is on the same page. Consequently, Synergy communicates academic performance results and expectations to all stakeholders on a regular basis in various ways. Before each school year begins, parents and students attend an orientation in which we use multimedia presentations to educate the community on statewide testing and what it means for their community. Many parents with children that have been in other schools for several years have informed us that nobody ever taught them how to understand this information. The second goal of the meeting is to review the school's vision, analyze students' past statewide testing performance, and establish the goals for the year.

During the year, Synergy holds Family/Community meetings every other month. On a weekly basis, teachers send reports to parents that inform them about their children's performance. Student-led parent conferences occur twice a year, and report cards are sent home three times a year. The school newsletter recognizes students who are performing well, and staff learns about student performance during weekly staff meetings. Other communication tools include award ceremonies, fliers, brochures, family and student handbooks, staff handbooks, the school web site, and our school-wide Message Monday Envelope.

Synergy's entire school community has bought into the importance of creating a "sense of synergy" among all stakeholders, and everyone knows that they play an important role in helping students achieve. As evidence of

this, parent meetings always attract a full house, even though most meetings are held on Friday nights. Also, teachers typically have every single one of their students' parents show up for parent conferences. These examples show that informed parents are willing to sacrifice their time to learn how to better help their children.

4. **Sharing Success:**

Synergy's mission is to eliminate the staggering achievement gap that has persisted for generations among educationally disadvantaged students. We believe that the gap is too big for any one person or organization to close single handedly and that only by sharing best practices with others can we all begin to systematically change how children from disadvantaged communities are educated.

Synergy already has much experience sharing its successes with others. For example, school leaders have given presentations on a variety of topics, including using data to drive instruction, at numerous conferences. These venues include annual conferences hosted by the California Charter Schools Association and The Charter Schools Development Center. For the past two years, Synergy has been identified as a national "silver gain school" by EPIC (The Effective Practices Incentive Community) and has had the opportunity to share best practices nationwide via their web based Knowledge System.

Synergy has hosted visits and meetings for many charter and non-charter educators. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) staff and Board members, Los Angeles County Office of Education staff, local and state politicians, including California's State Superintendent, teachers, and administrators have met with us to discuss the causes behind our success. Many have been local, but we have also met with educators from other areas such as New Orleans, who are trying to make a difference in their own community.

As a unique example of sharing success, Synergy is the first charter school to form an academic best practices partnership with LAUSD. In the fall of 2010, both organizations will occupy the same campus and work in a cooperative community. This will provide educators to learn from each other's professional experiences. In addition, we are in the planning stages of becoming a National Professional Development Center for educators from around the country. Being awarded the National Blue Ribbon status will bring respect to our current and future endeavors.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. **Curriculum:**

Students have access to a rigorous, relevant, standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the California content standards and enables students to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners. Teachers deliver instruction in whole group, small group, and individual settings. Synergy's instructional practices do not subscribe to any single school of thought, but focuses on bringing together the best of all available pedagogy for our students' needs. Additionally, in order to prepare our students to be the 21st century's future leaders, we integrate technology into our curriculum.

Synergy's K-3 language arts program is the research-based Open Court Reading program, which focuses on the National Reading Panel's recommended five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Grades 4-5 also focus on these five areas of reading instruction while teaching the Core Knowledge literature program, which builds the background knowledge that students need to be culturally literate. Students participate in a language lab every day where they use a variety of programs. These programs include Ticket to Read (phonemic awareness and phonics), Rosetta Stone (oral language fluency), Reading Counts (independent reading) and ReadAbout (challenging non-fiction reading comprehension passages with science and history content).

Harcourt is Synergy's K-2 math program, and Excel Math is used in grades 3-5. Both programs emphasize problem solving skills and algebraic thinking. Additionally, teachers use TouchMath to build computational fluency by tapping into different students' learning styles since this program uses visual and kinesthetic/tactile cues. Grades 4-5 also use the Spatial Temporal (ST) Math technology program to help student visualize challenging, abstract algebraic concepts, such as balancing equations and solving for variables.

In science, students engage in hands-on activities through FOSS Kits (Full Option Science System). FOSS provides hands-on learning that makes use of investigation and experimentation. Students also engage in language arts and math because they read and write about what they are learning, and they apply measurement skills and other mathematical skills. Synergy uses the Harcourt science textbook series to complement hands-on learning. Students gain greater comprehension when they read from their science textbooks as they have prior knowledge from their hands-on experiences.

Synergy uses Harcourt for its social science curriculum in order to help students to acquire knowledge, to develop critical thinking skills, and to study the past and its relationship to the present. Experiential learning is critical for student understanding. For example, students do not just read about how other cultures met their basic needs, but teachers bring realia into the classroom, including examples of clothing and tools that different people used. Students participate in a variety of field trips. For example, when fourth grade students learned about California history, they traveled via airplane to the Sacramento area to learn firsthand about our state government and to visit the location of California's gold rush. For many of our inner city students, this was their first time outside of Southern California and their first time on an airplane.

Synergy teaches the visual and performing arts (music, visual arts, theatre, and dance) to provide a well rounded curriculum and to leverage instruction in other curricular areas. For example, music is used to promote oral language development and to reinforce math concepts such as counting, patterning, and fractions. Many visual arts lessons are also connected to mathematics since they teach the use of geometric shapes, symmetry, and patterns. Students have learned from professional artists by attending live theater performances and through partnerships with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Synergy believes in the importance of physical education by providing all students with structured physical education activities. Students learn gross motor movement skills and social skills that are essential for participation in sports and recreation activities. Synergy engages the entire school community to promote health literacy among its students. In the past, for example, Synergy has hosted dental screenings provided by the University of Southern California, and has arranged for optometrists to hold parent workshops about the importance of good vision and healthy eyes.

2a. **(Elementary Schools) Reading**:
(This question is for elementary schools only)

According to reading experts including E.D. Hirsch and Louisa Cook Moats, reading is the most important skill that children learn in school because reading opens the door and ignites learning in every curricular area. Therefore, in order to develop a strong reading curriculum, Synergy bases its program on the five research-based factors that most influence reading success - 1) phonemic awareness, 2) phonics, 3) vocabulary, 4) fluency, and 5) comprehension strategies. Additionally, research shows that the instructional needs of disadvantaged students are best met when they are provided with reading curricula that address these factors. For these reasons, Synergy uses Open Court Reading and Core Knowledge as its main reading programs.

Synergy's reading curriculum is unique because students are taught to be young linguists, and they learn the science behind the art of reading. This helps students become more confident readers, which helps instill a love of reading. In a second grade class, for example, students, including English Learners, take pride in applying their linguistic knowledge of open, closed, and r-controlled syllables to accurately decode unfamiliar words such as mezzanine, perseverant, and elaborate. Older students use cognates and Greek and Latin roots to discover and appreciate the meaning of rich vocabulary words. During fluency instruction, students learn to read sporadically in order to better extract the meaning from a passage. These strategies lead to greater comprehension, and students who once struggled with reading now find it a more joyous process.

Reading instruction is not taught in isolation, but rather permeates into all subject areas. In Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics, students apply their reading expertise in order to gain skills that may have escaped them had they not been strong readers. In the computer lab, students tackle both complex fiction and non-fiction text. With strong reading skills, students have a greater joy of the arts, especially music and theatre. Synergy's reading curriculum equips students with the skills necessary to open any door they may want to walk through.

3. **Additional Curriculum Area:**

Just as the goal of Synergy's language arts program is to develop fluent and confident readers, the goal of Synergy's mathematics program is to develop fluent and confident mathematical problem solvers. Synergy values mathematics just as highly as it values reading because these two skills are inextricably related to our school's mission of educational equity and our vision of college admissions for our students. As mentioned earlier, Synergy is located in the inner city where very few students go on to college. Synergy believes that in addition to reading, mathematics is an agent of change that can drastically alter the course of an inner city child's future.

Synergy's math program recognizes the importance of computational fluency, which improves problem solving ability in much the same way that reading fluency improves reading comprehension. Additionally, students engage in hands-on activities by using manipulatives such as base-ten blocks, linking cubes, and fraction circles and bars. These manipulatives facilitate mathematical understanding of abstract concepts such as place value and adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators.

Our math program emphasizes early algebraic thinking and notation, even in the early elementary grade. Because algebra is the language of mathematics, it is the key to mathematical understanding, and it is the prerequisite to higher-level math such as calculus. Additionally, algebraic notation helps students visually keep track of complex logical relationships. Synergy does not shelter young students from using algebraic notation, but rather equips them with this skill because it makes it easier for students to understand complex mathematical concepts.

4. **Instructional Methods:**

As an inner city school, Synergy's serves students with diverse needs from various subgroups, including English Learners and economically disadvantaged students. Therefore, Synergy differentiates instruction and provides academic support to ensure that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, have access to the curriculum and can meet or exceed grade-level standards.

Teachers use direct, explicit instruction in all academic areas. Additionally, through the use of data, teachers anticipate individual student needs and preteach lessons to groups likely to need additional support. By frontloading instruction in this way, those students are more engaged in the lesson when it is presented to the class as a whole because they are more familiar with the information and are not caught off guard by new concepts. Synergy teachers have come to realize that "preteaching" reduces the need for "reteaching." If still necessary, teachers will also reteach a lesson or concept. During lessons, teachers use visuals, manipulatives, realia, and short videos to build background knowledge and to help create schemas for students. Graphic organizers and thinking maps are used to help organize information and prepare for writing assignments. Cooperative grouping is done heterogeneously to allow students at different levels to learn from each other. English Language Development strategies such as think time and pair sharing are used to ensure engagement.

Students are taught that through cognates, the knowledge of one language helps them understand another. For example, the knowledge of the Spanish words "brazo" (arm) and "abrazo" (hug) help students understand the meaning of the English word "embrace."

Both special education instructors and general education teachers meet Special Education students' needs in accordance with their IEP. All students are mainstreamed and the resource and general education teacher work together to determine the best strategies to ensure that child meets or exceeds grade level standards. Synergy also uses "search and serve" to identify and provide early intervention for students so that they may not need special education services in the future.

5. **Professional Development:**

Synergy's professional development plan has played a vital role in helping Synergy respond to student and teacher needs and achieve unprecedented success in South Los Angeles. Each summer, Synergy holds a Teacher Training Academy to provide professional development that assesses students' needs in relation to the content standards and charts a course for helping all students meet grade-level standards. This ensures that the entire staff is on the same page instructionally and helps to build instructional coherence. Data is used not only to identify student needs, but also to identify professional development needs. This way, teachers are better equipped to respond to specific student needs. The professional development plan is then adjusted in a responsive manner. For example, during a session based on student comprehension scores, a presentation was given on how fluency impacts reading comprehension. This resulted in all teachers making sure that they included strong fluency instruction in their reading curriculum. Teachers have received outside training in areas such as classroom management, science instruction, differentiated instruction for gifted students, and language instruction for English Learners.

Teachers collaborate regularly (both during weekly meetings and informally as well), and Synergy's small size allows for the unique opportunity for much greater cross grade-level collaboration and support than

would normally occur on larger campuses. For example, since fourth grade students are responsible for mastering more writing genres than any of the previous grade levels, teachers in grades K-3 decided that they need to go above and beyond their own grade-level standards in order for their students to be successful once they reach the fourth grade.

Teachers also have opportunities to observe one another in each other's classrooms. Due to Synergy's collaborative nature, teachers have grown professionally by sharing best practices with each other. Synergy's administrators are experienced former teachers who are instructional leaders and provide ongoing support for all teachers. New teachers are assigned a formal mentor whom they work with throughout the year and observe how veteran teachers handle instruction, classroom management, and school-wide procedures. Providing support to new teachers gives them the confidence and skills they need to be successful.

6. **School Leadership:**

Synergy's leadership structure, which includes its Board of Directors, administrators, teachers, and parents, ensures the involvement and collaborative efforts of the entire school community. Leadership has been a driving force by setting a shared vision of student achievement and by coordinating resources to achieve that vision. Open communication and trust are essential components to creating the relationships necessary to ensure that policies and programs are focused on the school's vision of student achievement.

Synergy's leadership has implemented a rigorous program that has lead to improved student achievement, as evidenced by the unprecedented results that the school has attained. Leadership analyzes data and facilitates the flow of information generated by Synergy's comprehensive assessment process. Also, leadership communicates data on a timely basis to all stakeholders. Policies and programs are developed with input from the school community. For example, the Parent Council helped create policies regarding attendance, homework, and behavior, which all impact student achievement. Teachers spearhead curriculum committees that have evaluated instructional materials. Even students get involved as evidenced by our Student Government meeting with lunch vendors to discuss healthy menu options.

The Principal and Assistant Principal both take an active, visible role in maintaining the school's culture of achievement. They greet students and families as they arrive on campus in the morning, and both oversee after school dismissal, ensuring both visibility and accessibility to families. Instead of a typical "office," these administrators work in the computer lab. This enables them to interact with every student and every teacher every day. They also serve as instructional leaders by leading staff development, observing lessons and providing constructive feedback, and by teaching demonstration lessons. Synergy's administrators are teachers first, and both are involved in instruction by pulling small groups of students for intervention during the school day and/or after school.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 2 Test: CST

Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: ETS

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	80	90	73	90	65
% Advanced	45	40	30	65	25
Number of students tested	20	20	40	30	20
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	81	88	73	94	63
% Advanced	50	31	30	69	25
Number of students tested	16	16	37	16	16
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	84	87	73	100	71
% Advanced	47	47	30	71	29
Number of students tested	19	15	33	17	17
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced			64		73
% Advanced			14		27
Number of students tested			14		11
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading Grade: 2 Test: CST

Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: ETS

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	85	90	68	95	90
% Advanced	60	35	18	50	15
Number of students tested	20	20	40	20	20
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	88	94	65	94	44
% Advanced	63	25	19	44	6
Number of students tested	16	16	37	16	16
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	89	93	67	100	53
% Advanced	63	40	21	53	18
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced			50		45
% Advanced			7		0
Number of students tested			14		11
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 3 Test: CST

Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: ETS

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	96	95	55	25
% Advanced	68	63	50	33	5
Number of students tested	19	40	20	18	20
Percent of total students tested	95	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	5	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	94	95	50	28
% Advanced	64	60	47	29	6
Number of students tested	14	35	19	14	18
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	100	97	95	53	29
% Advanced	71	67	53	33	6
Number of students tested	14	33	19	15	17
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced		94			31
% Advanced		63			8
Number of students tested		16			13
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading Grade: 3 Test: CST

Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: ETS

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	53	51	40	34	5
% Advanced	16	13	5	17	0
Number of students tested	19	40	20	18	20
Percent of total students tested	95	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	5	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	50	49	37	21	6
% Advanced	0	11	0	7	0
Number of students tested	14	35	19	14	18
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	50	52	42	33	6
% Advanced	21	15	5	20	0
Number of students tested	14	33	19	15	17
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced		31			8
% Advanced		6			0
Number of students tested		16			13
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 4 Test: CST

Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: ETS

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	84	95	85	80	72
% Advanced	53	76	55	38	36
Number of students tested	49	21	20	24	11
Percent of total students tested	98	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	82	95	82	80	
% Advanced	56	75	53	35	
Number of students tested	39	20	17	20	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	88	95	83	76	
% Advanced	22	84	50	33	
Number of students tested	40	19	18	21	
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	77	91		69	
% Advanced	31	73		38	
Number of students tested	13	11		13	
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading Grade: 4 Test: CST

Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: ETS

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	64	81	70	25	45
% Advanced	35	38	25	8	0
Number of students tested	49	21	20	24	11
Percent of total students tested	98	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	61	80	65	25	
% Advanced	33	35	24	10	
Number of students tested	39	20	17	20	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	63	84	67	24	
% Advanced	15	37	28	10	
Number of students tested	40	19	18	21	
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	15	73		15	
% Advanced	0	18		8	
Number of students tested	13	11		13	
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 5 Test: CST

Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: ETS

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	88	70	85	62	56
% Advanced	56	40	25	31	0
Number of students tested	25	20	20	16	9
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	87	68	79	60	
% Advanced	52	37	21	27	
Number of students tested	23	19	14	15	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	91	71	82	57	
% Advanced	57	41	24	29	
Number of students tested	23	17	17	14	
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced		64	75	58	
% Advanced		27	33	25	
Number of students tested		11	12	12	
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading Grade: 5 Test: CST

Edition/Publication Year: 2003 Publisher: ETS

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	May	May	May	May	May
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	80	65	40	32	11
% Advanced	44	25	5	13	0
Number of students tested	25	20	20	16	9
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	78	63	29	27	
% Advanced	39	21	0	13	
Number of students tested	23	19	14	15	
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	83	65	41	29	
% Advanced	43	29	6	14	
Number of students tested	23	17	17	14	
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced		45	33	25	
% Advanced		9	8	17	
Number of students tested		11	12	12	
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes: